



QuestBusters™



Vol. VI, # 7

The Adventurers' Journal
July, 1989

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In one era, out the other

Activision teleports Infocom to California!

The little white house has been boarded up, the entrance to *Zork's* Great Underground Empire sealed off, and thousands of curious artifacts and red herrings packed away in boxes: little more than two years after Activision's acquisition of Infocom, the California-based company has shut down Infocom's Cambridge, Massachusetts, office. First word came at the Computer Game Developers Conference in Sunnyvale, where the author of *Planetfall* and *Zork Zero* was seen wearing a badge that said "Steve Meretzky: Make me an offer."

Don't panic, however, for according to Joe Ybarra, vice president in charge of Activision entertainment software, "The Great Underground Empire, curiously enough, has *not* been shut down. What's happened is that we're in the process of relocating it to the West Coast" [far from M. I. T.'s Artificial Intelligence lab, birthplace of *Zork* and the Infocom saga]. "As you might imagine, a lot of the rationale for doing that is financial. Market conditions as a whole are not as good as in the past. And of course for Infocom and the type of product we've been building in the past, it's definitely gotten a lot worse."

Consolidating on the Coast

"On the other side, there were a couple of other issues, starting with the changes we were making in ZIL (Zork Implementation Language). Many of those changes were to get object-oriented graphics, animation and sound effects into the code. A lot of that was already ongoing at Mediagenic on the West Coast, so rather than having a 3,000-mile difference between the places where the programming was going on, it was a lot more efficient to put it all under one roof. [Activision changed its corporate name to Mediagenic in 1988, keeping the Activision name for its entertainment line.] Last but not least was consolidating all the 'people resources' in terms of getting our designing, producing and management all under one roof."

"Basically we're keeping Infocom as a separate business unit inside Mediagenic, with Rob Sears as General Manager. We want to keep Infocom going, and with all the rumors going around now, we're eager to let our illustrious users know that we're not stopping development—on the contrary, Marc Blank is actually working on a project for us right now. It's not a *Journey* sequel, at least in the literal sense, and won't even use the same system. This



Joe Ybarra (with optional palm tree growing from top of head)

one will have a lot more graphics and animation."

Knowledgeable text adventurers have revelled at the humorous references to Infocom insiders over the years, things like the Dorn Beast in *Sorcerer*, a send-up of Michael Dornbrook (founder of the *Zork* User group and head of Infocom's marketing until now). Like Dornbrook, the rest of the original crew won't be teleporting to California. Marc Blank, on the West Coast since last year, is working from home on his next Infocom game, but Dave Lebling, Steve Meretzky and Stu Galley, the sole survivors of the Activision

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The Usurper: Mines of Qyntarr

All-text adventures are vanishing faster than sea otters in Prince William Sound (a fate that was accelerated even more when an Exxon tanker smashed into the adventure game section of a San Bernardino Eggheads last week), so devotees of the genre should appreciate *Usurper*, a 1985 game finally published this year.

The title screen calls this "Book III," which suggested Books I and II would follow in a series of prequels. But a call to Sir-Tech clarified the situation: the author, Scott Thoman, submitted designer's notes on all three games, and Book III was chosen as the most exciting way to start the series. Since then, however, they've decided against producing another one (not because it isn't selling, just that it's not selling fast enough, as was also the case with First Row's *Dr. Dumont*).

Thoman's tale begins in a forest, where a nearby sign reiterates King Aken's warning that death lies in store "for those who would seek a certain Orb." But death means nothing to an in-

trepid adventurer with a saved game to fall back on, so I plunged into the cabin and grabbed the lantern and saber (just as I did in *Zork I*) and headed for the cave that led to the Mines of Qyntarr.

After recovering scraps of parchment, notes and assorted other clues, I eventually surmised the long-range goal is to track down and deal with King Aken in his invisible castle, which does entail recovering the previously mentioned Orb of Qyntarr (obviously this did not require a great deal of surmising). This turns into a classic "find the treasure and turn it in for points" adventure along the lines of *Original Adventure* and *Zork I*.

When it came to picking out puzzles, Thoman chose non-violent solutions for dealing with dragons, ogres and a familiar-looking Pirate who insists on killing you. That much I like. Rather than killing or resorting to magic, you'll solve most problems with an item or password.

Clues to their whereabouts may be found in notes, the inscrutable utterings

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Adventure Hotline



Letters
to the
Editor



New POB for QB!

Yes, we've moved again—gotta stay one step ahead of those Orcs, you know. All correspondence (except for the subscription cards found in games) should now be sent to QuestBusters, POB 5845, Tucson, AZ 85703.

SSI Moves Too!

While some software companies are struggling through the current slump, others are expanding. SSI just moved to larger spaces at 675 Almanor Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086. The new customer support number: (408) 737-6810.

Call Me Bonds: Azure Bonds

SSI says *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, the sequel to *Pool of Radiance*, is scheduled to ship in July for C 64 and IBM. It will accept characters from *Pool* and *Hillsfar*, or you can create new ones. *Bonds* will introduce more than 24 new high-level spells and lots of new monsters as your party unravels the riddle of the azure blue symbols that suddenly appear on the arms of everyone in the city of Tilverton. A cluebook is set for the fall.

Wibarm: A Japanese Action RPG Broderbund's *Wibarm* (pronounced WE-barm) is a 256K "action role-playing game" (their first) for IBM science fiction fans. You play an intergalactic investigator armed with a Wibarm, a heavily armed vehicle that can be transformed from an armored robot to a land cruiser or jet (which sounds a lot like the *Transformer* cartoons) to fight monsters in a series of mazes. The game is already a hit in Japan, and it's the first from ARSYS, Inc., to be converted for the USA market.

Universe III Blasts Off

Omnitrend announced a June 1 shipping date for the IBM version of their space saga, which will support the Ad-Lib and CMS synthesizer boards as well as EGA and CGA graphics; it employs an icon interface this time. Look for Amiga in August, ST in September.

Cinemaware's *The Kristal* and *Dark Side*

The Kristal of Kronos is an original stage musical adapted as a "graphic adventure, space exploration, arcade action" game. The plot involves a space pirate looking for that darned crystal. It was set to ship in May for ST and Amiga, with IBM to follow. *Dark Side* is a "3-dimensional space adventure" staged in the future, where a mercenary strives to save the

world from destruction. It's supposed to ship in June for IBM, Amiga, ST and C 64.

Epyx's English Mystery

Devon Aire in the Hidden Diamond Capers, an animated mystery adventure, is out for the C 64 and ST, with IBM, Apple and Amiga versions planned by Christmas. It looks and plays like a slick version of *Fairlight*, the British C 64 game of a few years back.

Conversions Keep A'comin'

Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego? has been released for the Amiga. *Gauntlet's* out for Mac, with color and sound on the Mac II. An ST *Pirates* in port. *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, Mindscape's action adventure, has been converted for IBMs with 512K, and it supports CGA, Tandy and EGA graphics (faster machines recommended for the last two). *Deja Vu II* is available for the GS.

Bug Report: C 64 Magic Candle

Two bugs cropped up in this conversion: if you don't have a fast load cartridge, the title screen freezes up, and there were problems with dropping and adding characters in the Knight's Room. The solution: send in your warranty card and you'll automatically get version 1.7, the latest upgrade.

The Jetsons and Gary Gygax

At the World of Commodore Show in L. A. (more on this next month), MicroIllusions was showing a beta version of *The Jetsons* on the Amiga. It's an animated adventure that was fun and easy to play. Gary Gygax, co-creator of *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*, was spotted later that day as he left a meeting with Jon van Caneghem at New World Computing (Jon won't say whether Gygax is designing an RPG for NWC, or if Gygax is now selling Amway.)

MicroProse on the Move

MicroProse bought Telecomsoft, the computer game arm of the British phone company, Telecom. Telecomsoft handled the Magnetic Scroll's graphic adventures imported by Rainbird. Now all USA distribution of *The Pawn* and other Magnetic Scrolls' games has been suspended. *Jinxter* is expected to be rereleased next year, but no others plans are set. MicroProse also announced a five-year contract with Dan Buntin (*M. U. L. E.*, *Seven Cit-*

Dear QuestBusters:

This is just a quick note to let you know I appreciate the way you responded so soon to someone's suggestion about putting the next issue's contents the Journal. I had wanted to see this kind of thing, too.

Linda Fischer

Funny you should mention it, because this time two of the reviews we had scheduled for this issue, Shogun and Tangled Tales, didn't arrive in time. That's one reason we stopped publishing a "Next Issue" section in the first place. Hopefully you won't mind an occasional snafu like this, since it is certainly bound to happen again. And hopefully we'll get both those reviews in the August issue.

Dear QuestBusters:

Will you be doing another *Quest for Clues* any time soon?

Murray Reinhardt

It was going through final layout at ORIGIN as we went to press with this issue. Look for it in July or early August. The solutions in Quest for Clues II were listed in the June issue, and we'll run them again next month. (This information will be added to the brochure that goes out to all new subscribers, so we won't have to eat up space in every issue with it.) If you want to go ahead and order, see page sixteen for price and shipping information.

QuestBusters™

The Adventurers' Journal

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Space Quest III: Best Quest of the Month

When last we saw Roger Wilco, he was making a break from the fortress of Sludge Vohaul in a one-man emergency spaceboat. Nobody knows how long he will drift aimlessly through outer space. Nobody knows the trouble he's seen. Nobody knows his sorrow. But I digress...

Space Quest III begins with our hero floating silently through space. How far behind has he left the evil Sludge? Maybe hours. Perhaps years. All we know is that Roger's spaceboat has been picked up by a robotic garbage transport. Only quick thinking will keep him from being reincarnated (or should that be recycled?) as a soda can.

Roger Wilco to the Rescue

The ultimate objective is to save Scott Murphy and Mark Crowe, those illustrious "Two Guys from Andromeda," who have been kidnapped by Scumsoft and forced to write inferior computer games. But first you will need to retreat from the roving recycler, tear apart the terrifying terminator, squelch the scurrying scorpazoid and prevail over the perilous pirates of Pestulon (a take-off on the *Pirates of Penzance*).

Space Quest III is not quite as linear a game as its predecessors. You are committed to the first and last scenes once

you start them, but the middle part of the game is more flexible. Once you get into space, several locations become accessible, and you

can fly back and forth between them as you like. You will have a bit of trouble walking around on Ortega before acquiring some kind of thermal protection, but you can go there, nonetheless.

A Video Renaissance

The Pirates of Pestulon is also not nearly as puzzle-intensive as most of the Sierra line—but what it lacks in riddles, it makes up for in sheer magnificence of special effects. I have to admit I've been slightly disappointed with the games after *Kings Quest IV*. Rosella's perils were an especially tough act to follow. Don't get me wrong: the others were excellent,

and I enjoyed them. The graphics and sound were great, but the music was much more scarce than in *King's Quest IV*, and aside from the graphics, the games seemed only a slight improvement over games developed under the old AGI

system. With the release of *Space*

Quest III, Sierra is once again pushing back the envelope (though not in the same style as with *Leisure Suit Larry*, which pushed back the plain brown envelope). This time they even recruited Bob Siebenberg of the rock group Super-

tramp to write the soundtrack. As with the other games made with the new Sierra Creative Interpreter, the graphics are wonderful: bright and crisp, revealing more detail than ever before and offering beautiful close-ups that add the kind of depth we could only dream of until now. In addition to maintaining Sierra's high standards of graphic excellence, *Pirates of Pestulon* adds a new dimension in detail. Several new video effects involving tricky manipulation of light and perspective were introduced. When Roger walks into an area that's deep in shadow, his color darkens. When he walks under direct lighting, he brightens (of course, he wasn't that bright to begin with!). In some areas, he even casts

his own shadow against the wall. While operating the fork lift, Roger's figure grows smaller or larger as he moves toward or away from the viewer. This effect is particularly dramatic on the planet Phleebhutt (who thinks up these names anyway?), where he struggles across sand dunes in several areas.

Some Sound Device

By now most people are aware of the recent strides in enhanced sound. Traditionally, only the stock one-voice and the three-voice Tandy had been harnessed in Sierra's adventure. In four of the last five games, the Ad-Lib, IBM, and Roland MT-32 music boards were supported. Sierra has now increased this to include

the Roland MT-100 and a stand-alone Midi card used with a Casio keyboard. Support for the CMS Creative Music System is also in the works, but was not included with this game. (CMS users should contact Sierra.)

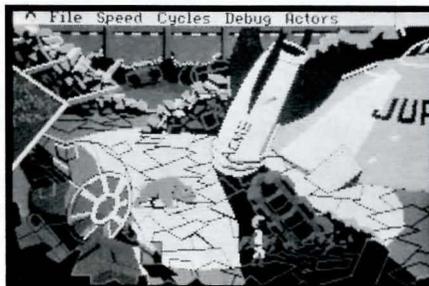
If they handed out Academy Awards for computer games, *Space Quest III* would surely walk away with one for effective use of sound. In previous animated adventures, background music has always been restricted from screen to screen. This was used effectively in *Kings Quest IV*

by giving each inhabitant his own little theme song. In *Pirates of Pestulon* this has been taken a step further. Whole areas now have melodies that play uninterrupted as you cross from screen to screen, adding to the feeling that you are actually participating in a movie.

All of the enhanced music cards sound excellent with this game, but the Roland is truly in a class by itself. With eight parallel synthesizers, 32 voices and a Midi interface, the MT-32 has always been considered a serious musicians' tool, but its impact as a sound effects generator only becomes apparent in *Pirates of Pestulon*.

During this review, I played the game

Continued on page seven



IBM version

Type: Animated SF Adventure
Systems: 512K required (640 on the PC JR & Tandy; 8 MHz or faster processor and hard drive recommended); supports CGA, EGA, MCGA, TGA, Hercules & PCjr graphics, Ad Lib, IBM & Roland MT-32 music boards
Planned conversions: GS, Amiga, ST, Mac, Apple II (128K)
Version reviewed: IBM (on a Tandy)

Inventory

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By Stephen King

Hillsfar: it takes a Thief (or a *lot* of Knock Rings)

Just across the Moonsea from Phlan, site of the *Pool of Radianc*e scenario, lies the city of Hillsfar. Originally built by the Elves, Hillsfar is now ruled by Merchant-Mage Maalthir and patrolled by the Red Plume Guards. The quests that await your solitary character depend on his or her class: Cleric, Fighter, Magic-user or Thief. Each class has three different

quests to complete, so you really get a dozen quests in Hillsfar.

The manual doesn't

state the exact number of quests, which perhaps was not finalized when the docs went to press. There is no ultimate confrontation with Maalthir or anyone else, another variation from the standard "wizards and warriors" scenario.

From the moment you ride in on a galloping white charger, action is the key word. As the landscape scrolls past, you'll be leaping fences and bales of hay, dodging arrows and other dangers in your mad dash for the city gates. You can lose hit points when you fall off the horse, but won't die this way (so don't use a Healing Potion right before you hit the road; wait till you reach your destination).

Your first goal in town will be to find the appropriate Guild so the Guild Master can assign your first quest. (Copy protection consists of a codewheel required in order to talk to the Master.) Here you may also rest and tend to class-related activities, such as getting a Thief's lock-picks repaired. Guild actions and NPC interactions are conducted via simple menus or Y/N options.

A Walking Tour of Hillsfar

Then it's out on the town. When you turn, you see a 3-D picture of a building or wall on the left (reminiscent of *Alternate Reality's* graphics) and its name (if it has one). On the right, the main map appears.

Encounters with locals often lead to clues, gold and useful items. These are all-text affairs in which you usually type Y/N in response to a question. The text messages displayed during encounters often disappear before you have time to make notes. That's no problem, though, for by punching the "R" key, you can recall the last clue for review.

Don't dawdle in your explorations, and be ready to punch that pause button: one real minute equals one game hour, and shops are only open during certain hours. (Try to enter when a place is closed, and you'll wind up in a regular maze instead of the shop.) Fortunately, the manual lists each building's hours. At the same time, this provides a convenient list of the

eighteen locations in town, from the Haunted Mansion and Temple of Tempus, to the Book Store and Bank. These sites are numbered on a map on

back of the manual, so all you have to do is visit and identify them. Of course, *all* the mazes aren't marked on the map.

The action isn't limited to the city limits, for you can consult a Disneyesque map in the manual for locations of a shipwreck, trading post and other local attractions. When you leave town, the aerial-view map reveals several roads from which to choose before setting out. These may lead to more mazes or NPC interactions.

Once a Thief...

As a Thief, my initial mission was to find the poisonous fungus, hidden in a maze, as are most the various quests' tangible objectives. Shown from an oblique angle view, each labyrinth is filled with treasure chests, teleports and guards. Though this recalls *Gauntlet* and other action adventures, several aspects of dungeon-delving in *Hillsfar* distinguish its mazes from others. Each time you enter a labyrinth, your entry point is randomized, making it harder to map. And you can't exit through the entrance. After awhile, a message alerts you that the exit is now available, but it's up to you to find the randomized location.

On top of these obstacles, you're also facing a time limit. A horizontal bar diminishes as time runs out. When that happens, the guards grab you and the loot

you've just stolen, then toss you out. No real combat occurs in these phases; that is, the guards can hit you, but all you can do is run. Basically, maze-marauding here is like one of those contests in which you get to run amok in a supermarket, grabbing as much food as possible before the buzzer goes off.

Into the Arena

Sometimes, however, the guards throw you into the Arena, where you'll fight gladiator-style battles against Orcs and other fiends. My first time in the Arena was easy: I slew Lefty the Left-handed Orc with three bashes over the head with a pole, and never even read the manual's combat section. After getting wiped out by the Red Minotaur the next time out, however, I decided a quick glance at the docs wouldn't hurt!

Combat moves include tactics such as "attack left," "block right" and "special attack." You can use the joystick or keyboard on the 64 version, only the keys on the IBM. (If you're having trouble, specific combat clues for the Arena are freely dispersed in one of the Pubs.)

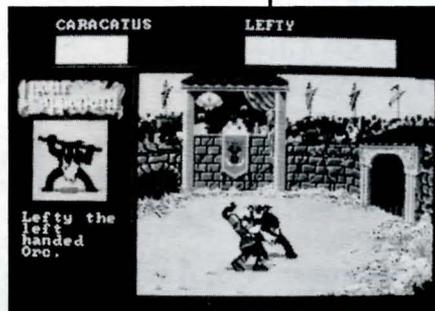
Another test of hand/eye-coordination is found at Tanna's Target Range, where you can rent and practice with ranged weapons such as slings, daggers, arrows and magic wands. Competitive events give you a shot at winning gold as well as improving your weapon skills.

Character Creation

You can import a character from *Pool* or *Azure Bonds* (which would be a real trick right now, since *Bonds* has yet to be released). Though you can't move the character back from *Hillsfar* to *Pool*, it will be possible to move one back to *Azure Bonds*. As usual, many items won't be transferred, but in *Hillsfar* you also lose your magic spells. The manual says there's a way to transfer magical items, with your improved character, from *Hillsfar* to *Bonds*. (I couldn't try any transfers, since my entire *Pool* party committed suicide when they realized how long the combat sequences took!)

Those who wish to create their own character may choose from the standard Dwarf, Elf, Gnome, Half-Elf, Halfling

Type: Action Adventure
Systems: C 64
Planned conversions: IBM, Apple, Amiga
Version reviewed: C 64



The Arena (IBM version)

By Shay Addams

and Human races but only from four classes: Cleric, Fighter, Magic-user and Thief. Non-humans can combine classes. Alignment and Ability scores (attributes) range from 3-19, and you can punch a key to reroll them until satisfied. Finally, you choose an alignment and a name.

You can't train up a level or improve attributes such as Strength in this game, which limits its value in building up a character, though you will earn experience points and some gold and items that your character may retain when transferred into another *A D & D* game.

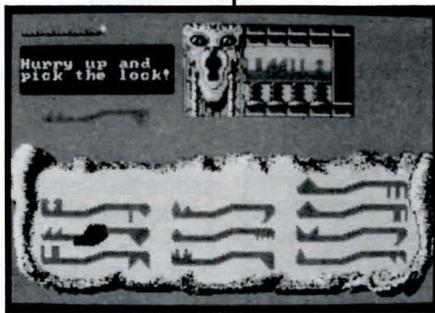
Taking a Tumble

In conventional RPGs, a Thief's ability hinges on his lockpick skill and Dexterity attribute. Here it depends on *your* lockpick skills, which will be sharpened considerably by the time you complete the game. Instead of "using lockpick" and waiting for the program to roll its internal dice, you're treated to a picture of a lock with several tumblers, each with a distinct pattern matched by one of the lockpicks seen at the bottom of the screen.

To pick the lock, you must match each tumbler with the correct pick, one-by-one. Try the wrong pick, and it might break or jam the tumbler. With joystick or cursor keys, you choose a pick, whose shape then appears beside the lock. If it looks right, you punch the button to use it.

This is easily the most authentic lockpicking puzzle I've seen, and I've seen most of them. You won't always have all the right picks, and may have to use force or other means to open a lock. If a pick is broken because you tried it on the wrong tumbler, it can't be used until repaired. And some locks are also booby-trapped to go off if the wrong pick is inserted.

You don't *have* to be a Thief. Enter Hillsfar as a Mage or other non-Thief, and NPCs will randomly offer to assist your efforts (for half the recovered gold). But the NPC won't pick the locks, for his presence merely allows you to use his picks. (Just like in real life, you do all the work, and someone else gets half the pay!) Locks may also be opened magically: a Knock ring or Chime of Opening will do the trick. Mastering the knack of matching the picks to the tumblers, how-



Lockpicking

from a menu, and combat options and a few other commands are executed from the keyboard.

A Saddle-sore Save Feature

The game's biggest drawback is that it forces you to ride all the way back to Camp to save your progress. Then to continue playing, you've got to ride back to town or another area. Once I got hit by robbers and lost half my stuff. But since the next screen sent me directly to Camp, where I couldn't inspect my character to see which items had been stolen, I didn't know whether to go ahead and save—or ride all the way back to town to survey my inventory (icons show the number of Rings, Potions and so on). This method

ever, remains the most cost-effective way to penetrate the dungeons.

I was frustrated by the lockpicking business for the first day or so, but grew encouraged as my lockpicking skills advanced with practice (too bad they didn't include a training area for lockpicking, like the Target Practice sequence). When possible, I relied on a Knock Ring to open locks with more than four tumblers, because there's also a time limit on this test: a fuse burns down to remind you time is running out (and the pause feature is disabled here, though it works in the mazes). You might also resort to sheer physical force to bust down a door, provided your character is strong enough.

When I played out the Mage role, I was sent out to find a giant squid to make ink for the Guild Master's next scroll. Upon actually finding it (by relying on the old "blunder around in the maze till you bump into something useful" technique) I wasn't too surprised to learn I had to visit another dungeon for the next piece of the puzzle.

The joystick's movements vary with the situation. While riding, for example, pushing the stick left slows down the horse and the button fires your Rod of Blasting. But in town, pushing it left turns you in that direction, and the button produces a search of the area. In some cases, you'll choose options

of game-saving was probably used to make it harder for novices to rely on frequent saves, but those are exactly the players who need such security.

I quickly grew tired of those long rides, especially after I'd roamed far from Camp, and had to make several trips,

from one site to the next and finally to Camp so I could save my game. The designers should have at least put several Camps around the outdoors maps to cut down on all the riding back and forth. (A Teleport spell would have been even better!)



In the maze

Westwood did a smooth job of design and implementation here; even the manual excels, with an abundance of color and a prolific history of the local myths and history of the Elven Court (a lot like *People's Court*, but with a much shorter judge). There's also refreshing variety in the patterns in the walls of the mazes, the animation and sound effects are fine, and the game runs briskly (in RAM most of the time) on the 64. The IBM version will support a hard disk. A \$7.95 cluebook was just released.

Conclusions: SSI calls this an action adventure, but it involves more mini-quests and RPG-related activities than I've seen in most such games, which are usually "shoot-'em-up-in-a-maze" games like *Gauntlet*. With *Hillsfar*, *Times of Lore* and *Prophecy*, the action adventure is evolving and mutating faster than other adventure styles, and may represent yet another "wave of the future," if you're ready for that cliché again. I wouldn't recommend playing *Hillsfar* just to improve your existing *A D & D* characters, or for gamers who thrive on elaborate combat and magic systems and intricate puzzles. But one of the game's strong points is that the puzzles are simple and clues are plentiful, so you won't short-circuit any synapses while questing the night away. So for some lightweight entertainment, *Hillsfar* is just what the Medicine Man ordered. I really don't even like action adventures, but enjoyed this one; hard-core Orc-slayers may find it a good time-killer while awaiting their next major expedition into the unknown.

Skill level: Novice

Protection: Codewheel

Price: \$39.95

Company: Westwood/SSI

War in Middle Earth

You all know the story. There is this short fellow named Frodo, a Hobbit who inherits a magic ring from his eccentric uncle Bilbo. This gets him an all-expenses paid tour of Middle Earth, where he runs into tall Men, sturdy Dwarves, lissome Elves, ancient Wizards and nasty Orcs. In the game you play Frodo, and if you can keep him alive long enough, later on you'll assume the roles of Gandalf, Aragorn and a host of others. The program handles the role of the evil Sauron and his pack of monsters that want only to kill you and steal the One Ring of Power. There's a built-in time line to the story, adapted from J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. If your actions don't set events moving in one direction, the passage of a certain date on the game's calendar triggers them. Come January, Sauron's armies will be on the march.

The game is aimed at Tolkien fanatics like myself, but should have broad appeal to all sorts of gamers, for it combines many of the best features of several genres: role-playing (you take the part of various characters), graphic adventures (object manipulation and lots of animated pictures as you proceed to solve a long-range goal) and strategy wargaming (maneuvering armies and directing their battles). Indeed, the wargame is fascinating in itself, as you mobilize widely dispersed forces to counter the enemy troops. For a more challenging game, try to win by defeating Sauron's forces without throwing the Ring into Mount Doom.

During the game you can switch among three modes: animation, tactical and strategic. The first is like Sierra's animated adventures, showing characters as they walk, talk, fight and gather or discard objects such as Elven blades and mithril armor. Each scene is unique, and the programmers created a very impressive tour of Middle Earth, especially for a nature buff who appreciates crystal-clear streams, lofty mountains and sunlit meadows. Sound effects and characters' voices are not digitized, which was a good move, considering the poor quality of the Amiga's speech synthesis.

Animation consists of characters mov-

ing inexorably from left to right in a natural walking motion; the different gaits Hobbits, Elves, Nazghul and many other beings are clearly shown, quite an impressive feat of programming. Characters (there are more than 80 in all) walk at different speeds and may pull ahead or fall behind others.

Larger troops are depicted with a few characters, such as 200 horsemen represented by five. Having a lot of characters on-screen at once makes it hard to do things

like take or transfer objects from one character to another. To tell Frodo to pick up something, you've got to click the mouse on him, then on the Use Object icon in the upper-right corner—but you can't click on Frodo if there's a horse in front of him. And once all characters have walked completely across a screen, you can't just turn around and go back to it. You may revisit a place, but must do so by switching to one of the map modes.

"Puzzles" consist of obtaining objects that affect your character's success in battle, so the problem-solving side of the game is overshadowed by its war game aspects.

In addition to walking, characters can do battle, in which they line up and make lunging

motions with sword or dagger, or they can sit or lie down, usually beside a camp fire. (It's a wonder Frodo and his pals haven't burned all of Middle Earth to cinders, since they never douse the fire when they leave camp.)

It might take weeks or months to finish the game in this mode, but luckily you can jump to tactical mode. Here all characters and armies are represented by counters moving on a map, and things happen a lot faster. Forests, rivers and other features are shown in a realistic top-down view on a scrolling, 36-screen map unveiling all of Middle Earth. Here you mainly make movement decisions by clicking on a unit and a destination.

Frustratingly enough, characters and

armies don't always move in straight lines, often wandering zigzag toward their goal, sometimes even wandering off somewhere else. Unlike in the animation mode, they're affected by terrain features in tactical mode; rivers, for example, can be crossed only at bridges and fords.

In strategic mode, you view a beautiful map of the land, where all the good forces and locations are seen in blue, the evil in red. Characters and armies blink on and off. In this mode you can save and restart games and view the big picture at a glance. It's also a way to pause the action, for time doesn't pass here.

The program runs at Normal, Hasty or Very Hasty speed, and you can play an entire game in three-four hours at Hasty.



IBM version

Don't Take a Number, Please

The game encourages true role-playing by hiding the numerical values of the attributes, and even their names, from you. This may hint at a new trend in role-playing—away from the mathematical model of *Dungeons and Dragons* and toward a non-quantifiable model of life in which you have to go on estimates and how things "feel." Other recent games using hidden attributes include *Journey*, *Neuromancer* and *Times of Lore*. As one of the creators of the old-style, numbers-oriented role-playing weltanschauung, I rather like knowing that my Strength is 32, but can certainly see how the reality of the gameworld is enhanced when you never have to stop and worry about the mathematics of a situation.

The game's creators even expanded Tolkien's world by adding new lore to the legend in the form of original artifacts such as the Scepter of Annunias. During combat, meaningful choices—do you charge, withdraw, or completely retreat?—are required. When it looks like you'll win the battle, it doesn't matter if the Ringbearer is slain, since someone else can carry the Ring. But if you're losing, get Frodo out of there in a hurry, or it's all over.

Another strong point is that the game's abundance of possibilities give it extra replay value. After learning to beat the *Sorcerer Lord* in PSS's game of that name, the game lost much of its appeal. But *War in Middle Earth* offers lots of other courses of action after you've won it one way.

Lakes in the Sky?

I'd like to say the game's perfect, but an apparent bug in the Amiga version oc-

Type: Hybrid (Graphic Adventure/Strategy-War)

Systems: ST, Amiga, GS, IBM (three versions in individual boxes: EGA or Tandy, 384K required; CGA, 256K; 3.5" MCGA version, 512K)

Planned conversions: C 64 (June?)

Version reviewed: Amiga

By Ken St. André

asionally causes duplicate images on the screen, and weirds out the graphics: lakes and mountains floating in the sky, etc. Another time my pointer turned into a brush and really messed up the picture. The mouse action grew difficult and more imprecise as the game went on (since I roll it about on a less than even surface), and I'd rather have used a joystick—an option not available on the Amiga version. All versions support keyboard and mouse controls, but only the IBM also lets you use a joystick.

Most seriously, the keyboard will eventually lock up during lengthy sessions, leaving you unable to do anything for thirty minutes or so. That's why I advise saving frequently after your first two hours of play. (At least the game never crashed completely.)

Perhaps I want too much, but there were a few design decisions I would have made, all in animation mode. I don't see why every scene had to be outdoors and aboveground, since the same technique that led to variable terrain backgrounds of mountains and forests could have been used to create backgrounds for interiors of buildings, caves or even city streets. Maybe it was due to lack of disk space, since the two disks were already packed full, but I wouldn't have minded swapping out disk two for a disk three if I'd been able to explore Moria's interior. That's a design decision, however, and I'm not criticizing, just wishing.

Also, the characters you meet usually spout worthless trivia instead of really solid advice or clues. What good does it do to learn that the Scepter of Annunias has washed ashore in Arnor, when all your characters are in Lorien and you'd have to recross half the world to Find it, then take it to Dale before it would be of any use? I'd rather hear the Lady of Lorien quote something from the novel and present her Elven gifts than listen to a clue for finding an object that may or may not exist (yes, there are red herrings). By the time she finishes talking and your party starts moving, it's hard to pick up the rope, cloak and light before the gang leaves the screen.

The 46-page manual summarizes the story and includes a marvelous glossary of all people, places and things in Middle Earth. Copy protection is built into a two by three foot parchment map. Two-thirds of the way through each game, you have consult the map for the coordinates of a place, then type them in.

Due to memory limitations, the C 64 game will be a radically different version, so I'll review it separately when it arrives. Mastertronic says there is no animation mode in the C 64 version. Instead, you get a different kind of battle mode in

which you direct your troop's actions.

Conclusions: There's a lot to like about this game, which is incredibly faithful to the spirit of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, including every major character. Visually it's stunning in every mode, and the soundtrack is awesome—some of the best computer music I've heard in a game. I also like the ability to play "what if" with the events of the novel, such as what might have happened had Frodo chosen not to visit Rivendell and plunged south into Mordor alone. You can try to keep your actions faithful to those in Tolkien's prose, but will find this difficult to accomplish, unlike in many adaptations that lock you into the novel's plot whether you like it or not. Considering the game's many excellent aspects, my objections are really minor. *War in Middle Earth* has a certain appeal for wargamers, but Tolkien fans will find it most fascinating. For these gamers I give it my highest recommendation.

Skill Level: Introductory

Protection: Keyword

Price: \$49.99

Company: Melbourne House/
Mastertronic

Space Quest III

Continued from page three

all the way through in three different sound modes. First with the stock one-channel voice, then with the Ad-Lib music synthesizer and finally with the MT-32. I tried the CMS board using the older driver, but an incompatibility problem froze the game right after the opening.

Aside from the clearly superior music, it was soon apparent I was hearing things with the MT-32 that otherwise simply weren't there. An extremely life-like desert wind could be heard on the planet Phleebhut. Ortega had the creaking and rumbling of volcanic activity and settling earth. I counted 14 different special sound effects heard solely on the Roland, from cheering/whistling crowds, to the clackety clack of typewriters and the ring of telephones in Scumsoft's offices.

Are we having fun?

Of course no *Space Quest* would be complete without the offbeat humor of those ubiquitous Two Guys. As you walk through the game, keep a close eye on the background, you might see some familiar old friends...like one of Wile E. Coyote's old Acme rockets, or the now defunct Jupiter II from *Lost in Space*. Speaking of space, didn't that vessel at the burger joint look familiar? It sure headed out of there in a hurry! Probably going where no man has gone before.

Death has also been personalized. There have always been lots of ways to expire in Sierra adventures, but only a single message was displayed afterwards. *Pirates of Pestulon* has almost as many different messages as there are ways of getting killed. It has gotten to the point where it's almost as fun getting exterminated as it is playing the rest of the game.

Purina Snake Chow indeed!

Control of the central character is, as usual, accomplished with the keypad or joystick. For the more adventurous players, mice are supported. If you select the appropriate drivers during the install sequence, you can use all three modes (depending on your mood and situation).

The parser is the enhanced version that has been used in all the newest Sierra adventures. It is much stronger on synonyms and understands the pronoun "IT" in limited situations, but is somewhat weak on multiple directives.

The only part that I had trouble with was the *Astro Chicken* arcade game. For some reason, I just could not control the chicken. After intense frustration, I finally developed the knack and had no further problems. I do take minor exception to the cryptography sequence at the end of the game. It is a severe strain on the eyes to try and decode characters displayed on a video screen.

This sequence is not really necessary to complete the game, but since you would not otherwise find out what your mission is, *Space Quest III* doesn't seem complete if you bypass it. Such puzzles should be restricted to an extra point situation, so people could avoid them if they wished.

Pirates of Pestulon comes with six 5.25" and three 3.5" disks. I played on a 4.77 MHz PC-Clone and found the action to be slow, but fast enough to be worth playing if I didn't have a faster PC. Many people will be happy to hear that copy protection has been completely done away with on this game. No key disk, no key word and no hidden files. Whether or not this practice continues probably relies on how many copies are sold as opposed to stolen.

Conclusions: *Space Quest III* is pure entertainment: graphics are faultless, the music is better than ever before and the story—from the mugging by the giant New York-style rat right up to the surprise ending—is a riot.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Protection: None

Price: \$59.95

Company: Sierra

Walkthrough: Magnetic Scroll's FISH

The Goldfish Bowl

Uvso pwfs. Enter castle. Enter smooth warp.

Smooth Warp

SE. SE. E. Pick up bird cage. W. Open bird cage. Drop bird cage. W. NW. N. (Wait for Micky to leave.) Pick upejtd. S. SE. E. Get mould. E. Open cupboard.

Get crucible, tongs, gloves and ibnns. Wear gloves. Hold crucible with tongs. Put disc in crucible. Hold crucible over fire. Pour gold into mould. W. W. NW. NE. E. (Wait for mould to cool.) Break mould with hammer. Get ring. Enter jagged warp.

Jagged Warp

Get jeans. Wear jeans. S. Tfbsdi svccjti.

Get torch. Turn torch on. E (4). S. Get pew. Turn off torch. N. N. Turn on torch. Drop pew. D. S. Yes. Tfbsdi efcsjt. Move lid. D. Get cord. U. N. U. Get on pew. Climb arch. Ujf dpse to gargoyle. D. Pull dpse. Get gargoyle. D. S. D. Remove dpse from gargoyle. Put gargoyle in hole. Get chalice. Enter jagged warp. Get tee-shirt, jeans and torch. Wear tee-shirt and jeans. S. E (4). N. D. S. D. Look in chalice. Get grommet. Enter small warp.

Small Warp

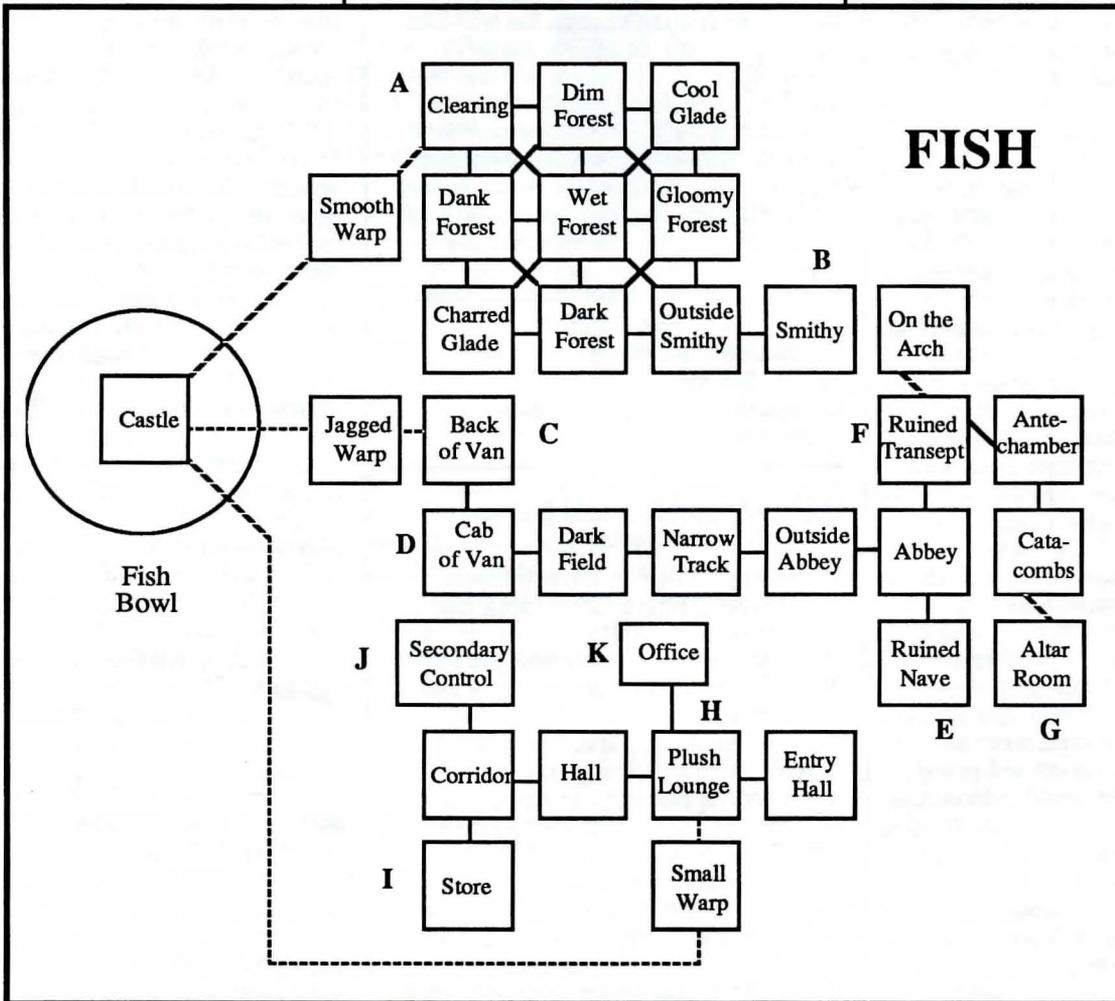
Spe, nblf some coffee. Get tape. W. W.

Turn switch. Open wooden door. S. Get bin. N. Open secondary door. N. Close door. Push button. Open cupboard. Get head cleaner. Play head cleaner in cassette player. Tfu gbefs to gjwf. Play tapes in cassette player. (Write down three-number combination.) Open door. S. E. E. Open door. N. Examine cabinet.

S. SE. E. S. Buy ears plugs with fisa. N. E. Buy hyperdriver, screwdriver and bag with fisa. W. N. Buy fishton with fisa. S. W. NW. NW. D. (Wait for train.) Enter train. Wait (3). Exit train.

Opah University: The Protocopier & the Computer

U. E. S. Buy satchet with fisa. N. E. S. E.



FISH

S. Turn to page 321. Tear page. E. Put id in slot. E. SE. Put page in slot. Turn switch off. Get glass box. NW. Sit down. Login. Spbdi. Me. Commands. Games. Shutdown. (Note name of Shutdown's owner.) Quit. Logout. Get up. NE. Drop box and hyperdriver. SW. Put id in slot. W (5). D. Wait for train. Enter train. Wait (3). Exit train.

Eelpout
U. NW. W. W. Buy mask with fisa. Give mask to drunk. Ask drunk for card. Buy mask with fisa. Give mask to (anyone but yourself). Buy mask with fisa.

Set lock to (use all three numbers of combination from above: 152, for example, not 1, 5, 2.) Open cabinet. Get spindle. Enter large warp.

Paddlington

Look under Fishton. Get pass and fishofax. Examine fishofax. Put hand on print. S. D. S. E. D. (Wait for train.) Enter train. Wait (3). Exit train.

Pickerel

U. SE. N. Buy tie and glasses with fisa.

Buy cylinder with fisa. Give mask to (anyone but yourself). E. E. SE. D. Wait for train. Enter train. Wait. Exit train.

The Museum

U. N. N. Open satchet. N. Get crystal. S (3). D. Wait for train. Enter train. Wait. Exit train.

Paddlington: The Dark Warp

U. W. N. U. Get case. N. Drop all. (Save game.) Enter dark warp. (This puzzle's solution is randomized. The object is to eliminate all possible directions except up, which appears every other move.)

By Paul Shaffer

Guardians of Infinity: To Save Kennedy

The year is 2087, and the world is headed for certain disaster. Ok, let's not be mealymouthed about it. It isn't just the world that's in trouble—the entire universe is on a path to complete destruction!

It all began in the latter half of the 21st Century, when certain temporal anomalies started to appear. At first it was only random inanimate objects, like an 18th Century horse trough that materialized for a few seconds and then quickly disappeared. As the century draws to a close, however, this phenomenon has accelerated at an alarming rate, becoming increasingly dangerous at the same time. It's gotten to the point where an entire barbarian horde might appear in a hospital lobby and butcher everyone in sight before vanishing back in time.

My Man Adam

Enter Adam Cooper, a man with the intelligence of Albert Einstein, the grim determination of John Wayne and the cool self-confidence of Oliver North. Adam has the potential to be a true hero at a time when the universe needs one the most. Then again, he might be a fanatical maniac willing to do whatever is necessary to further his cause. But of course, that's the stuff heroes are made of: the willingness to take chances another man might consider insane.

Adam has devoted his life to the study of these temporal anomalies. Having come to the conclusion that time itself will shatter within the decade, he and his partner have created an "ark" to transfer themselves and a team of specialists to the original point of the temporal disturbance. Special equipment has pinpointed 1963, the Kennedy assassination to be specific, as the crucial moment in history.

The Adventure Begins!

Guardians of Infinity is not your average text adventure, for it deals with a specific portion of our history. It also differs in its attention to detail and strict adherence to real events in John Kennedy's life and the lives of his close associates during the week prior to his death.

The adventure begins with the trip

from 2087 in progress. In a few moments, you are notified by the computer that you've reached your destination: Friday, November 15th, 1963, at 8:00 AM Central time. As Adam, you have one week to direct your five-person crew to success or failure.

You must decide where they need to go and who is most important to see in the limited time available. Additionally, you must choose which of your people to send. This can be critical, since one person may be able to accomplish a given mission no one else can. You will only leave the ship if you successfully arrange a meeting with the President to discuss his imminent demise.

The crew includes Carl Czernak (your partner), Bridgette Cooper, William Stein, Iris Steel and Alex Blue. Each is a specialist. Alex is a diplomat who is used to dealing with very touchy situations. Stein is an eminent history professor and direct heir of Kennedy. Bridgette has a B. A. in history and is a specialist in the Sixties. Perhaps the most interesting personality is Iris Steel, an extremely capable mercenary whose loyalty to her employer is legendary.

All Parsed Out

At first glance, *To Save Kennedy* seems almost unlimited in scope, but it soon becomes apparent that it isn't. Since you

aren't exploring or picking up things, the parser doesn't need to get very complicated. You will primarily be directing the crewmembers to go to specific places at certain times to see the people you decide are the most important.

The parser can handle compound multiple sentences, so conversations with the crew will seem more natural. For the most part this succeeds, but occasionally falls on its face. Several times I specifically told a character to go to a hotel in Washington D. C., only to have him ask if he was supposed to go to Fort Worth.

It is also not very big on synonyms. Just for laughs, I tried to have Iris go kill Lee Harvey Oswald at the Texas Schoolbook Depository where he worked. Since this is such an important place in the Kennedy assassination, I figured the program would understand, but it required that I specify only his home, office or hotel.

To be fair, it will be quite a while before a computer will be able to respond naturally all the time in English, and this simulation does hold up well under most circumstances. Restrain yourself a bit and only use words the game clearly understands, and you should have very little trouble.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Like everything else Paragon has done so far, *Guardians of Infinity* is unique. As far as I know, there is no other computer game even remotely like it. The closest thing I can think of is Infocom's *Suspended*, in which you direct the actions of several robots.

Since all the crew members are very limited, this game should be far less challenging than *Suspended*. But because the list of people you have to potentially deal with is so huge, *Guardians* has a "needle in the haystack" quality that may make solving it impossible for all but avid fans.

My first complaint is that the player actions are far too repetitive. Aside from keeping up with the local news, all you do is tell the crew to go different places at certain times. You are also expected to do several days worth of reading before you even start to play. In my experience, it's like pulling teeth to get someone to read the most rudimentary instruction sheet before playing a game. In this one, you have to read a small novella to familiarize yourself with the personality traits of your crew, then you have to study a 150-page mission manual that contains, among other things, mini-biographies of nearly 100 people.

History buffs or time travel fans might find such extravagant documentation extremely interesting. Clearly, an awful lot of research was involved, and the books were obviously intended to be as much a part of the game as the actual play time.

There is an alternative for people who would rather wait for the movie. A "slide show" disk that roughly parallels the novel offers several high resolution EGA/CGA pictures, along with some text to explain what's happening. The graphics are very good, and the text covers key events in the booklet without going into extreme detail.

If you examine the slide show and read the few pages in the operations manual that refer to crew biographies, you can probably get started with little trouble, but my gut feeling is that if you are not the type of person to bother reading both books, you probably would not enjoy this game anyway.

By Stephen King

Details, Details

As I said earlier, the game is text-only, but color screens are included. Some people with monochrome systems may have a bad time reading unfortunate color combinations. Of course, if you want to view the slide show disk, CGA or EGA graphics will be necessary (Tandy TGA is not supported).

Sounds are limited to one or two effects that enhance the action. An interesting telephone sound lets you know when someone is trying to reach you on the communicator. Two 5.25" disks are included, plus the one for the slide show. Paragon will send 3.5" disks on request. **Conclusions:** Even though I'm an avid time travel fan, I have mixed feelings about this one. Personally, I didn't like it. I do recognize however, that a lot of tender loving care went into it. To get another opinion, I loaned my review copy to a friend who is very interested in political history in general, and Kennedy specifically. He spent two weeks perusing the material and planning his actions before he even typed in his first command.

So far, he loves the game and feels it was written with only him in mind, but I wonder if he'll ever finish it. The number of details that you have to familiarize yourself with is truly staggering. Probably many false starts will be made by anyone playing all the way through. The ultimate problem, of course, is that this game will appeal to a severely limited audience. Given the amount of work that must have been involved, I hope that group is large enough to make it pay off.

Skill Level: Advanced
Protection: None
Price: \$44.95
Company: Paragon/MicroProse

Infocom Heads West

Continued from page one

buy-out in the spring of 1986, apparently turned down the chance to head west.

"We're trying to negotiate with Meretzky and Lebling to do projects, and it's not clear whether they'll stay with us," Ybarra said, "but they won't be making the trip to the West Coast. Actually that's been a problem for us, because there are several people we'd prefer to see go with us, but who want to remain in the Boston area.

"Elizabeth Langosey, who's been with Infocom more than five years and is staying in Boston, is developing a project for us. It's not clear where Lebling will end up. Steve Meretzky will probably move on to other things, and Michael Dorn-

brook is contemplating starting a mail order business."

Like a Rolling Cornerstone

When Infocom was originally sold to Activision, two reasons were apparent, though only one was cited: Infocom would benefit from Activision's "world-wide distribution," according to then-President Joel Berez. Industry rumormongers insisted Infocom had gone off the deep end with *Cornerstone*, an IBM data base with which they had hoped to crack the applications market (being in the same building with Lotus seems to have affected their logical processes, since *Gravestone* would have been a more appropriate name).

The product line changed little after the Activision buy-out, until the 1988 decision to do away with all-text games in favor of graphic adventures and role-playing games. Activision had formerly marketed only a couple of graphic adventures, like Interplay's *Mindshadow*.

For gamers, the big question is not where Infocom is located but how the move will affect the games. Ybarra foresees that: "...you'll probably see a shifting in direction that's commensurate with which way the market is headed. If you look at all the successful products, they're graphics- and sound-intensive. Products as a whole are pushing more toward role-playing than toward our classic adventure game. I think we'll be building more hybrids that share elements of all these different genres. In particular, one of the areas I find most exciting is getting into more interactive graphics [similar to ICOM Simulations' *Deja Vu*] the idea of doing things that are object-oriented...a cross between *Manhole* and the Hypercard environment and our traditional object-oriented ZIL environment.

"Since Rob is General Manager, I won't be directly managing Infocom in the future. My role is vice president of entertainment software development, dealing with not only Infocom issues but also all the computer software issues and videogames."

Sears, who joined Infocom about a year ago, says he spent "eight or nine years in the toy industry, working with Milton-Bradley and Coleco on strategy and board games, that type of thing, as well as the hand-held electronic games, and the Vectrex and Atari 2600. The fascinating thing about coming to Infocom from the toy industry," Sears elaborated, "is that there are so many similarities (in terms of game design), that get carried over from traditional archetypes in determination of different dynamics in game-

play, how the different elements come together and the cross-over, in terms of the consumer, from the hobby gamer to the computer gamer. There's really a huge overlap, and I'm seeing a lot of old friends in a new light."

Ybarra, who worked behind the scenes producing *Star Flight*, *Bard's Tale* and other RPGs for Electronic Arts until he moved to Activision late last year, hinted at an even heavier emphasis on role-playing games for Infocom: "We recently hired Mike Moore, who was with Victory Games [a paper and pencil RPG outfit] and editor and publisher of *Aries Magazine*, to help pioneer new game designs, which reinforces Rob's observation on the similarities between the traditional board game genre and computer games. One of the things I found really fascinating, having worked with Michael Stackpole and Brian Fargo on *Wasteland*, is that getting the board game guys more involved in the stuff we're doing on computers is a real boon to the design capabilities of where our genre is headed."

Adventure Hotline

Continued from page two

ies of Gold) for exclusive rights to future products from his Ozark Software (formerly with Electronic Arts). Microprose also picked up distribution for Paragon Software, who left EA recently, but lost Lucasfilm Games to EA after Lucasfilm changed their minds at the last second.

ORIGIN Leaves Broderbund

In one of the more genuinely amicable partings (the press releases *always* use that word when a company leaves one distributor for another), ORIGIN and Broderbund announced at the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago that in July ORIGIN will be going completely on its own: "...into the world of full-service software publishing," as ORIGIN's President Robert Garriott summed it up. "Broderbund has one of the few affiliated label programs that truly helps a small company grow to a size where it can stand on its own and enter the real world." Broderbund's Chairman of the Board Gary Carlston said "It's been rewarding to have helped ORIGIN pursue its growth, and it's exciting to see the company take this step."

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Continued on page thirteen

The Last Ninja II

Ninja II picks up where the original story left off, with one slight hitch. Though you still play the part of the last surviving Ninja in your Brotherhood (the others were wiped out in the first game), you're no longer in China. Instead, you've followed the evil Samurai Armakuni to a place more dangerous than your worst nightmare.

That's right—modern-day Manhattan, where Armakuni's hated Ninja flunkies are causing chaos in the streets. This might have been an easy mop-up job, but because you're also wearing a Ninja costume, the local police can't tell you from the bad guys. That means you have *no* allies in the Big Apple, my friend, and more than enough enemies.

The opening scene takes place in Central Park, where you'll find the weapons used in the rest of the game. None are easy to locate, but in a fit of compassion, the designers left some clues in the instructions. Because items blink on and off when you enter a new location, most are easy to spot. This effect gives you no clue on how to use these things, so thank God (or Buddha, as the case may be!) that the designers gave us face-kickers some help in the manual.

Most action adventures require all the strategy of a solo Tic-Tac-Toe game, but the puzzles in this one are real

skull-scratchers. There's more to *Ninja II* than just "shoot everything that moves and you'll win." Every object you find serves a definite purpose, and there are no red herrings. This was a good idea, since it's hard enough to figure out how these things work without having to worry about stuff that has no bearing on the game. And if you try to beat everyone you meet, you'll just end up dead. As Confucious said, "A hero who runs lives longer than a fool who fights." (What he forgot to mention is that the game will also last longer!)

As you traverse New York's seven levels, you'll tread its mean streets (complete with muggers), explore the famed sewers (complete with rats and a *big* alligator), climb down to a skyscraper's basement and up to a 50th floor office on your way to the Warlord's Mansion and the "Final Battle." Mapping won't be necessary, for the action is confined to easily remembered areas, and most of the time you'll be following the only availa-

ble path. In the streets, however, always make a mental note of your location as you go; otherwise, it's easy to get confused. (And *never* jaywalk: this is New York, remember?)

With a joystick, you control your character in a 3-D landscape shown from an oblique angle. This perspective gives a feeling of depth to the picture, and also means you can walk into the rear of the picture, somewhat like the Lucasfilm adventures.

Though it's pleasant to look at and realistic to a degree, this turns picking up objects and conducting combat into a real chore. At these angles, it's hard to tell if you're properly aligned to pick up something. Many times my on-screen persona just bobbed up and down while I struggled to grab an item. And if you're not correctly aligned during combat, you'll miss a lot of times—while your foe rocks you to sleep (with real rocks).

I also fell to my death often because I missed a ladder while climbing down. When jumping over obstacles, watch where you land, or you'll wind up in real trouble. These problems with the perspective are annoying to say the least, for if you're not right on the money in this game, you usually

end up dead. After wasting countless moves trying to cross a stream, I just wanted my computer to shrug and say, "Close enough." This never happened, of course. Too bad the designers didn't plug in a "close-enough" subroutine.

When it comes to certain maneuvers, trial and error is the sole solution. After finally figuring out how to pass an obstacle, make a note of it and practice, practice, practice. It's the only way I found to contend with the interface and some of the movement puzzles. (But in the game's defense, Ninjas are *supposed* to be light on their feet.)

When turning to face a new direction, you'll also face another irritating problem. Turning is accomplished by "rolling" the joystick in the direction you want to face: to turn around 180 degrees, you don't move the stick backwards as you might expect, for this makes him *run* backwards. Instead, you must rotate the stick left or right *twice*. This is extremely hard to get used to. I frequently wanted to turn around to fight an enemy who was sneaking up on me from behind,

only to run backwards—right into his numchuckas. Ouch...there goes another life!

I can't see why they even programmed the character to run backwards at all, since this ability hasn't come into play since I've been at it. I wished they had programmed him to turn around instantly instead of going through all those positions. This would have been a great time-saver, not to mention a life-saver!

If you can put up with the interface, the graphics and sound—which are the game's crowning glory—may make it all worthwhile. The sights of New York really come alive (though unfortunately most of those sights also killed me), and the 3-D effects,



though they make it tough to maneuver, are a treat for the eyes.

Animation, especially during combat, is exceptionally fluid: no jerky movement or flickering sprites at all. Heck, within the border around the screen, a Ninja's face stares at you while you play. During the game, I noticed he would wink and blink at me. Extra touches like this make *Ninja II* fun to watch.

There are no sound effects in the 64 version, but you do hear different background music for each landscape. These tunes add a touch of atmosphere to the scenario. As you charge through Central Park, for example, a heroic theme plays, and an eerie dirge fills the Sewers.

You can't save a game in progress on the 64 version, but may do so on the IBM. Why Commodore gamers must suffer such a fate is harder to fathom than the game's interface is to figure out.

Conclusions: A faithful sequel to the original, *Last Ninja II* is filled with the same excitement, adventure and special effects. But it's also bogged down by the same interface and perspective problems. Whatever you thought of the original, you'll probably feel the same way about the sequel. It's recommended for those who loved the first one, and I even recommend it for people who didn't play the original but are willing to work through the puzzles and fight a bit with the joystick. The idea of a Ninja loose in Manhattan is intriguing.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Protection: Program

Price: \$34.95

Company: Activision

Type: Action Adventure
Systems: C 64
Planned Conversions: IBM

By Tim Snider

Usurper

Continued from page one

found in notes, the inscrutable utterings of a talking skull, and so on. To defeat the Pirate, for example, you must note the clue in the note. A few puzzles are deceptively difficult, and one of our other reviewers—who has turned in many a walkthrough for Infocom's hardest games—got bogged down and completely stuck.

Random encounters with the Pirate may lead to your death, and a Garbage Lady pops in now and then to steal something from you (as did the Thief in *Zork I* and the Pirate in *Original Adventure*).

At least one person will kill you without giving you a chance to escape. This situation is not a puzzle, just a random event, so frequent saves are recommended (up to nine can be stored on a separate disk). Other than that, you're generally safe wandering around the several hundred locations, which will definitely require mapping.

The display varies a bit from the traditional format for an all-text game. Descriptive text fills the top half of the screen, a horizontal bar in mid-screen shows the score (500 is tops) and number of moves, and the parser rests at the bottom of the screen, where the game's responses to your commands also appear. In each location, the command "look" triggers a description of a thing, person or object there, not the place. To reread that, you must exit and reenter.

Multiple commands are accepted by the parser, as well as pronouns, and the vocabulary is adequate. If the program doesn't recognize a word, it says so, but

won't always identify the problem.

The parser accepts the pronoun "it," but manages to get confused at times. When I looked at a triangle and learned it was a "three-cornered polygon," I tried to "get it." But the parser wouldn't stand for my greedy behavior, telling me "You can't get the steak."

While the puzzles satisfy, there's not enough text for an all-text game. Most disturbing are the brief, often curt descriptions of most items you'll examine:

"Nice saber," it told me when I examine the saber. Inspections of other objects enlightened me with revelations such as "Nice idol" and "Nice

gas mask." Accordingly, the story lacks the depth and richness of an Infocom all-text adventure (or even an Infocom graphic adventure in all-text mode). This is the game's biggest deficiency.

The 20-page manual provides background on the story, useful descriptions of monsters (from the standard Elves and Dwarves to the more exotic Chelazzion), a list of 73 verbs accepted by the parser, and lucid instructions on the game's mechanics.

Conclusions: Nice game. Nice parser. Nice puzzles. But there is nothing new in the story or puzzles, and not enough prose to keep a first grader busy. Even so, *Mines of Qyntarr* is an all-text adventure, the only sort of game some people play, so those fans will certainly enjoy this extended treasure hunt.

Skill Level: Novice
Protection: Program
Price: \$39.95
Company: Sir-Tech

Type: All-text adventure
Systems: Apple (128K required), IBM (256K, both disk formats in same box)
Planned conversions: None
Version reviewed: Apple

Adventure Hotline

Continued from page eleven

Class or Canadian, two for overseas.) You can even give someone a gift subscription and get the free issues (but you can't give a gift sub to yourself or a household member). And thanks to everyone who has already done so.

Contest Winners

This winner of this month's "Keys to the Kingdoms" contest, George L. Martin, will get the game of his choice.

Secret Contest & the Lost City Contest Winners

The winner of the Secret Contest (which

was to guess what the Secret Contest was) is Nadia Madden, who incorrectly guessed "What is the name of song on the start-up screen of *King's Quest I & II*? ("Greensleeves"). The correct question was: "Where did Duffy come from?", and the answer is: "Inspired by having to 'wait for Duffy' so much in Infocom's *Deadline*."

The Lost City contest winner is Ken Lin, who incorrectly guessed Kathmandu. In reality, the Lost City in the May issue is Chan Chan, royal city of the pre-Inca Chimu civilization (which was revealed in a clue in the key to the QuestBusters Code on page fourteen of the same issue). Both winners will get the game of their choice.

Waiting for Duffy

Duffy's busy lighting Roman candles with his brass lantern, so contact these people if you can help.

Bard 2-3: need maps and character-building tips. Jamie Squires, Rte 1, Box 251, Mannington, WV 26582
Wizardry 1: need maps, hints, etc. Mark Oehlert, 5041 Bent Tree Loop, Stone Mountain, CA 30083

The Pawn: how do I make lever to get past boulder? Also need help with Guild of Thieves. Erik Hom, 236 Elmira St, San Francisco, CA 94124

Corruption: need help in hospital & with Inspector Goddard. Heroes of Lance: need maps & general hints. Dan Bartram Jr, Box 2398, APO NY 09009

Future Magic: have trouble defeating raiders on their ships. Also need help with Star Flight. Kenneth Habeeb, 301 Standiford Ave #237, Modesto, CA 95350

Shadowgate: How do I get past drunken hobgoblins? Nathan Franklin, 30 Parkview Dr, Feeding Hills, MA 01030

Passengers on the Wind: what are the keys for playing the IBM version? Amit Saraf, Jl. Kelinci 1 #4, Jakarta 10710 Indonesia.

Ultima 2: where can I find a hint book? Bob Thompson, 3680 Forest Creek Rd, Jacksonville, OR 97350

BattleTech: need more men and Mechs. Can't find way past holographic face in inventor's hut. Michael Gardner, POB 2036, Bridgeview, IL 60455

Neuromancer, M & M, Ultima 4: need all maps, hints, tips. John Ransbottom, POB 491, Chesapeake, OH 45619

FOFT: Does anyone understand FOFT? Jim Hollingsworth, POB 27, Kelso, WA 98626

Enchanter, Zork 1-3: need help. Miles Hastie, 2 Spicer Circle, Unionville, Ont., Canada L3R 1X9

Elite: How do you complete Mission Five? Stephen Klick, 1108 Suntree Place, Kansas City, KS 66103



Keys to the Kingdoms



King's Quest IV

To enter the whale, go to the ocean near the lot—after you've been to the lot's castle. To exit the whale, go by his nebula and use the **qfbdpdl gfbuifs** to make him sneeze. When you get on his tongue, save the game in case you fall off. Start at left of tongue and walk diagonally to end.

Jamil Farshchi

The Magic Candle

If you include Min in your team, his Charisma enables you to talk to many important people early in the game. Buy **qfbsmt** to use in bowls in dungeons (to activate auto-mapping). Before attempting Dermagud (X19, Y32 in **Vcfsjpo**), buy a lens, pick, shovel and rope. To activate teleportation chambers in the dungeons, use **dvceft**, **tqifsf** and **qzsbnet**. Buy **Cppl** of **Tbcbo** from Azidamus in Soldain for 1,500 coins. Interrogate orcs in Port Avur jail about missing hammer. Gonshi mushroom patch is at X26, Y15 in **Qifspo**. Sermins are at X18, Y42 in **Vcfsjpo**. To raise the Dermagud gate, chant **bdivoof**, **sftijqubs**, **fcjupobhaj**. Valon Temple is at X32, Y36, reached through stairs in northeast corner of dungeon. Awaken god with **tibfsbe**, **vef**, **tibfsbe**, **gbfz**. Visit the three Elden Fountains and drink to permanently raise attributes. The hammer is buried next to Chief Chambur's Tomb in **Wpdib**.

David Thompson

Stay in Port Avur to build up supplies of gold, herbs, food, blankets and ropes. Have more than one person work to earn money. Head south to Soldain to boost learning skills. **Sfnvmeb** in Lymeric sells Ishban for 1,750; **Gjalsfup** sells Zoxinn for 2,000 in Shiran; get Demaro for 1,500 from **Ifyubsjt** in Theldair. Do dungeons in this order: Dermagud, Vocha, Sudogur. Visit the correct temples with a lens to read the chants necessary to awaken the gods. Valon's is on small island between two lakes just SE of Dermagud. Nexis' Temple is on Kuskunn, and Bird God is in Shertuz, SW of Sanctuary.

Noel Baur

Space Quest III

To escape the garbage freighter, **dmjnc** through **fzf** of **hjbou spepu ifbe** to reach bottom of trash pit and spaceship. After first encounter with Arnoid the Terminator on Phleebut, go through entrance in west foot of mechanical beast. Ride elevator to top and go up stairs to second platform. Stand next to lower pulley and wait for Arnoid. When he's under pulley track and walking toward you, **qvti** the

qymmzf. Then get his Invisibility Belt. At Monolith Burgers, order Fun Meal, eat food and get decoder ring. Play Astro Chicken and use ring to decode secret message. After blowing up force beam generator on Ortega, walk to anemometer at research station and **ublf qpmf**. **Vtf qpmf** to cross chasm on return trip to ship. A good strategy for winning battle with Elmo Pug is to block as many punches as you can, since he'll lose more energy than you.

George L. Martin

Heroes of the Lance

To slay dragon Khisanth, Goldmoon must lead your party and throw her blue crystal staff at him. Also, cast Deflect Dragon's Breath before entering the chamber. After it dies, run to the Disks of Mishakal, because the ceiling collapses. Potions: green heals a few times, orange gives temporary Strength boost, blue heals once and red slows down monsters for a while. To kill hatchling dragons, hit them low with arrows from a distance.

Michael Becker

Use flint to kill Bozak Draconians. Recharge blue Clerical staff by letting baby dragon breathe on it. Use Raistlin to jump chasms. Trolls and Wraiths: cast Charm or Hold Person, then Sturm. Cast Cure Light Wounds rather than Cure Critical Wounds.

James Tan

Might & Magic II

To finish Slayer's quest and get a million points, kill Queen Beetle at E2, 11, 16, Serpent King at E3, 5, 6, and Dragon Lord at D1, 10, 12. To get Dancing Sword spell, slay Mist Warrior at 15, 11. **New version:** to finish Lord Haart's quest (B1, 5, 5), find the Long One in the 8th Century (E2, 5, 4) and Weird Warrior Spaz Twit in 7th Century (A1, 11, 3). Long One has loincloth, Spaz has Phasor.

Robert Brezley

Squares that exclude certain races energize the party for one game month. Those excluding certain classes contain stat-boosting treasures for those

classes. Example: in Luxus Palace dungeon, level 1: no Dwarve at 11, 14; no Sorcerers at 0, 0; no Archers at 0, 15; passage to Hillstone dungeon at 15, 0; exchange Speed for Endurance at 5, 0. You can enchant *any* item, and Etherealize lets you pass through most barriers *and* walls. To become Triple Crown winners, start in Middlegate and buy a Green Key (at 1,8), then three Green Tickets (at blacksmiths). Set controls to Inconspicuous and save. Fight one battle in each of the three arenas in turn: Middlegate Arena (13, 2), Sansobar's Monster Bowl (13, 8) and Atlanteum's Coliseum (7,9). Save after each win, then take Green Key to Green Bishop (Woodhaven, 10, 6). Save, then go to Sansobar and repeat with Yellow Key and three Yellow Tickets. Take Yellow Ticket to Yellow Bishop (Castle Pinehurst, 13, 3). Repeat for Red from Vulcania and Red Bishop (11, 4 in Hillstone). Repeat for Black from Atlanteum and Black Bishop (Luxus Palace, 14, 14).

James B. Simpson

Deathlord

The spear is obtained from Senju in two rivers on Nyuku. Give him a crystal from the lagoon on north part of island two clicks west, six south of Tokugawa on Kodan (a click is a disk read). In lagoon, search houses near middle west of village. Get two crystals, since you need one to get Ruby Ring from Red Shogun's Palace. It's in room that's furthest south, with Mage trapped by force field. Search east wall. To escape, take passage in lowest westernmost cell in the jail and located a bit north of the Mage.

Tim Manda

Wizardry V

Gentle Pool at 20W, 1S, Level 5: level A heals (swim 1), level B cures (swim 2). Rope to Level 6 is at 13W, 1S, Level 5.

Mike Bertrand

The Loon has valuable info. He's on Level 4, reached through secret door from south tip of Level 3 (12E, 25S). You need **Cmvf dboemf** to open this door, found in temple at north end of Level 3. To open temple door, you need **Kfxfmfe tdfqusf** from Level 2, but *don't* trade staffs with Fat Priest. Before beginning this quest, though, you need pocket watch from safe in Timeless Room (NW part of Level 3), 12,000 gold, and key from pool guarded by Gypsy, which you reach on Level 4 via the elevator. Searching a room near Gypsy pool reveals an item needed in Timeless Room. The Snatch reveals the four elements that open the safe if you ask him about **time**. He is reached through secret door in Grand Ballroom on

The Apncjf App edition
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Code: count one letter
back—RC = QB.



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\$20 @: Moebius, Times of Lore. \$10 @: Shadowkeep & others. Want: Bronze Dragon and sequels. J. J. Parus, 1156 Lawson Cove Cir., Virginia Beach, VA 23455

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Minton, 3340 E. Red Bud, Knoxville, TN 37920

Pool of Radiance, \$25. \$18 @: Autoduel, Phantasie 3, Questron 2. \$15 @: Wizard's Crown, Phantasie 2. Robert Breezley, 4922 Coco Palm Dr, Fremont, CA 94538

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Continued on next page

Keys

Level 5. Find access disks on Level 4 to open each of the next sections on your quest for the Loon (ask him about destiny). Buy item he's selling (for Level 7). Fred P. Andoli

Alien Mind

To reach next level (unless you're on a terminal), press "n" (must be lower-case). Nate Trost

Gold Rush

To get through locked door in James' gold mine, **ujf tusjoh** to **nbhofu** (items found in Green Pasture Hotel's secret room). Put **nbhofu** through hole in door and lower it. When it picks up steel key on other side, raise magnet and unlock door with key. George L. Martin

Ultima II

To raise hit points, offer gold to LB. Father Antos is on Planet X (9, 9, 9). To save Magical Helms, save game, View the Helm, reboot game and continue from save. Rocket fuel? Tri-Lithuems. Magic Boots save paralyzed legs, Magic Cloaks save paralyzed arms. Use Norton's disk editor to change attributes: Look at side with numbers and try to find you have in

your last changed game. Set them high as you want, but they roll over at 99 points. (These are for original IBM version; may work in Trilogy version.) Lee Garrett

Neuromancer

A quick \$30,000: After entering Bank Gemeinschaft (code: **cbolhfnfjo**, password **wfscpufo**), hook into Bank of Berne and open an account (\$1,000 needed). Write down account number and hook into Bank Gemeinschaft and go to transfer money. Enter 646328356482, then **cpapcbol.**, then Berne account number. For another \$10,000: call Hosaka (code: **hoakacorp**, password: **gvohflj**). Edit list of new employees, putting in your own name and id number. Now you can buy a great Cy berdeck and get all the skill chips. Larry Moe's id: 062788138. Chris Steinbeck

Pool of Radiance

To defeat 8th level guards protecting Tyranthraxus, save game before descending stairs. Before going down, have character use Dust of Disappearance (from Orc's Temple in Temple of Bane). It keeps entire party invisible throughout battle with the real Mr. T. Have a Cleric turn your Undead, since T. makes them into Zombies that attack you. After slaying Mr. T., Finish any remaining quest *before* seeing

the clerk, who won't award any points after he's dead.

Julie Freeman

To raise lots of money fast, you need one platinum piece. Go to a tavern where people are gambling and bet the platinum. If you win, say no about gambling again; bet zero platinum. The game says zero is an "unacceptable bet," and you'll leave the gambling area—with your money intact! Just (L)ook to be able to gamble again, and this process may be repeated as often as desired.

Michael Noth

Wednor's Library: before entering, buy a mirror and ready it to defeat Basilisk. Search entire library for powerful manual; talk to Mad Man but don't let him join.

Brian James

Next Issue
CES Horror Stories!
The Omnicron Conspiracy
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Shogun
Plus Exclusive Sneak Preview!
And more news, clues & reviews!

Continued from previous page

AMIGA—\$20, DungeonMaster w/clue book. \$10 @: Moebius, Aaargh, ACS, Ports of Call, Archon, Plutos, Roadwar 2000. Tony Ellison, 407 N Division, Lowell, MI 49331

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Need bank of eight 256K chips for Tandy 1000 EX, or 256 or 384K expansion board. Send phone # if possible. Kevin Wagner, POB 36, Fombell, PA 16123-0036

Trade: Pirates, AR: The City, Captain Blood, Future Magic w/cluebook, BattleTech, Heroes of Lance, Pool of Radianc, King's Quest 4, Starflight w/cluebook, Alien Fires. Want Wizardry 3, Star Command, Roadwar 2000, Romance of Three Kingdoms. K. Lowe, 4412 Pacheco St, San Francisco, CA 94116

Trade Wasteland (both disk formats) for Future Magic (5.25" disks). Andrew Pollak, 2002 Regis Dr, Davis, CA 95616

ATARI

8-bit—sell only: Alternate Reality, Ultima 1 & 2, 7 Cities of Gold, Gemstone Warrior, Return of Heracles, Zorro, more. Write for list. Bob Albright, 912 Mt Rose Ave, York, PA 17403

ST—sell or trade: Phantasie 1 & 2, Mercenary, Moebius, Captain Blood, more. Bob Albright (See above for address).

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